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The Town of Shrewsbury is planning to test its ability to respond to a hazardous material or bio-terrorism event. The test will be conducted by Quabbin Healthcare Consulting Inc. and the Harvard School of Public Health Emergency Preparedness Center under the direction of the Shrewsbury Fire Chief and the Director of Public Health. This planned activity is in response to a presidential directive on homeland security. The U.S. Postal Facility in Shrewsbury has agreed to be our target hazard and will work with the town on the design and exercise of the town's emergency response capabilities.

Planning meetings have been ongoing for some time, but over the next few months additional meetings and trainings will be held to bring together all the organizations that potentially could be involved in responding to a hazardous material or bio-terrorism incident. These organizations are not confined to town departments. They include area, state, and national organizations.

Each organization has worked on a response plan for their discipline. These meetings will meld each group's plans into a unified plan of action in Phase One. Phase Two will test the viability of the plan by conducting a mock incident, or a functional exercise of the response plans.

Anticipating a favorable consideration by the Central Massachusetts Homeland Security Advisory Group, we are planning a real-time, on-the-road exercise of the joint plans some time in September, 2006.

This is a very ambitious project that will engage every town agency as well as many regional assets. The drill will fulfill the requirement for the certification of the town's Local Emergency Planning Committee and the planning requirements of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health..

Further information will be forthcoming in the months to come.